

10 Signs He Likes You by drizzlyfinn

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Summary:

"Are you sure this will work?" El asked her.

"Just do the dumb list. It seems stupid but it works. Well, at least, it worked with Lucas." Max said.

OR

El really likes Mike but doesn't know if he feels the same way. Max helps her by giving her a list from Seventeen with a page called, "10 Signs He Likes You."

10 Signs He Likes You

Author's Note:

this was really fun to write

"I like Mike." El said, out of the blue. Her and Max were walking to the Hopper cabin, dragging their bikes along too.

"I think we all know that, El. You don't exactly try and keep it a secret." Max looked over to her and El was looking down.

"But I don't know if he likes me. What if he only likes me like how he likes you?" She kicked a rock on the ground, feeling defeated by everything.

"El," Max stopped her and turned El to face her, "Mike definitely likes you the way you like him. He probably likes you more than you like him." Max *would* use the 'L' word but that would mean a whole separate conversation explaining what it is and how it's different from like. She didn't want to get into that today.

They walked a little more in silence until they reached the cabin. They stepped over the trip wire and El used telekinesis to move the bikes above the wire. She placed them in front of the house, leaning against a wall. They walked inside and into the tiny kitchen area. Max took off her backpack and set it against the table leg. El moved over to the freezer to grab four waffles, two for her and two for Max. Hopper said that she must always feed her guests. She also grabbed two glasses of water because Hopper also told her that guests cannot be thirsty. The toaster dinged and El grabbed them and put them on plates. She brought placed the 2 plates in front of her seat and Max then put the water in front of them.

"Thanks, El." Max said, biting into the waffle.

"Your welcome." Another manner Hopper taught El.

They ate their waffles and finished the rest of their homework. El asking Max for help with all her questions, especially Math and

English. Once they finished, they moved to El's room. Max went over to her record player (a gift from Mike, Joyce, and Hopper) and put on a Cyndi Lauper record. Max flopped on her bed next to El and they both stared at the ceiling.

"So how do I know that Mike *really* likes me?" Max groaned.

Max knew there was nothing *she* could say that would change El's mind. She decided she would have to try something else. Max grabbed it from her backpack and handed it to El.

"Don't tell anyone at school or in the Party about this. I don't want them knowing I do lame shit like this." Max stared at the ceiling while El flipped through the magazine.

"I don't get it. What am I supposed to do with this?"

"Page 18." Max slapped her face out of embarrassment.

El flipped a few more pages and then saw what Max was talking about. "10 signs he likes you?"

Max nodded. "Go through it and check it off in your head. If he does that or acts any way that it says, that's a good thing. Once you've gone through them you add up all the checks you have and then see what number is at the bottom. Each number has a rating of how much he likes you." Max felt like such an idiot for saying all this, knowing the hour she spent on this list.

"Are you sure this will work?" El asked her.

"Just do the dumb list. It seems stupid but it works. Well, at least, it worked with Lucas." Max said, blushing so hard that her face matched her hair color.

El read the first one. "Number one: He will often show interest in things you like or that matter to you. This is an attempt for him to be closer to you."

"Can we watch Days of Our Lives? Please?" El begged Mike. They were sitting in his basement with his new tv in front of them.

Mike groaned, "Do we have to?" El gave him puppy dog eyes and Mike knew he couldn't resist those. "Fine." He changed the channel to her favorite soap opera and sat back with her.

"Thank you!" She hugged him and focused her eyes back on the screen.

The show ended after a while and El turned to Mike. "What do you think?"

In all honesty, Mike wasn't all that interested. But, he didn't want to show her that he bored. "I really liked the show. I like when..."

This started a whole conversation. El told Mike the backstory of all the characters and Mike listened. He enjoyed the show more when she was talking about it. Now, watching new episodes together became their thing.

"That's one." She mentally tallied a one in her head.

"Wow. The first one already? You thought of one that quick?" Max was shocked. It took her a while to think back and see if Lucas did that for her (which he did. It was always very subtle so she never noticed).

El nodded. "Number two: He compliments and congratulates you, even when there is nothing big you achieved to get any praise from him."

"Mike, I think I got it all right!" El showed him the math homework that she just finished. They were in her room, both doing homework.

At this time, El had gone to school for the first time. After all the okays from Dr. Owen and the begging from Mike, Hopper finally caved. She enjoyed school but definitely found some subjects difficult.

Math was one of them.

But, looking over the problems she just finished, El didn't seem to find anything wrong. She handed the paper over to Mike who also looked over the problems. The smile on his face grew bigger and bigger the more he read.

"El, oh my god, it's all correct! I'm so proud of you!" Mike squeezed her so

tight that she felt like she was going to pop.

"Cool it, Wheeler!" Hopper yelled from his spot on the couch. He was looking back at them and noticed that Mike's hug went on a little too long and was a little to tight.

"But she got all the math problems right!"

"Good job, kid!" Hopper looked back at El through the open door. He smiled and she smiled back at him.

"Holy crap, El!" Mike said as he squeezed her again.

El blushed, "It's only a few math problems, Mike. It's not that big."

"But it is! This is amazing. Wow." He stared at her in awe for a few more seconds.

El pushed his shoulder lightly, "Let's finish the rest of our homework now so we can hang out longer before Dad kicks you out."

(And El didn't see it, but Hopper's smile grew twenty times bigger at the word "Dad")

"Oh, that's definitely another check. He is constantly praising you." Max said, rolling her eyes.

El smiled, "Yeah, whatever."

"What was the next one?"

"You know, I'm trying to imagine you sitting alone in your room, on your bed, and going through this. You know, acting like a teenage girl."

"Ha ha." Max stuck out her tongue and threw a pillow at El.

El threw another pillow back at her before laying down and reading the next one. "Number three: He does not want anyone to offend or insult you in his presence. He will defend you and make sure that you are safe and sound."

"I feel like you defend him more than he defends you." Max joked.

El hit her lightly with another pillow, "There are times where he defends me!"

"Name one."

"You weren't here yet but he always defended me from *your* boyfriend! With him always calling me a weirdo!"

"That is a good point, young one. That's a three out of ten. Next one!"

"Number four: He doesn't mind spending on you and may spend his last dollar in order to impress you." El chuckled to herself, "This knucklehead spends more money on me than on himself." She whispers to herself.

"I got you this necklace. It's, um, it's a snowflake charm. I just figured you should have something small to remember it by. The Snowball, I mean." Mike nervously handed her the necklace.

El held it in her hand and looked closer at the charm. It was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen.

"Thank you, Mike. It's pretty." She hugged him tightly. She pulled away, "Can you help me put it on please. I can't see the clip thing."

"Oh, uh, um, sure. Yeah." She turned around and pulled the hair away from her neck.

His fingers brushed her neck as he put on the necklace. His hands were shaky and her breath was trembling. They could both feel the tension rising between them, but neither acted on it.

He finally got it to clip and she looked down at the snowflake on her chest, right next to her heart.

She turned around, "Thank you, Mike. It's very pretty."

"Your w-welcome. It looks pretty o-on you."

"I hope this didn't cost too much. I know you were saving your money for

a new supercom. Max told me they're really expensive."

He looked down, cheeks red, "It took me a few days of babysitting Holly and mowing lawns. But it was worth it! It looks really nice on you."

El blushed even harder. She felt like her heart was going to burst from happiness. The happiness that Mike constantly creates for her. She just wanted to kiss him like he did in the school cafeteria. She wanted to stay with him all the time. She wanted to protect him like he protects her. She wants to take care of him when he's hurt like he took care of her. She wants him.

But she didn't know how to put that in words so she stuck to, "Thank you, Mike. This makes me very happy."

Her heart swelled at the memory as she tallied a fourth mark in her head. "There's another one."

"Four out of ten!" Max said before leaving to go the kitchen.

"Number Five: He smiles a lot and looks at you keenly." El was confused. *Keenly? What is that?* "Max!" She called out.

Max poked her head in, "What's up?"

"Keenly?"

"What about it?"

"What does it mean?"

"Oh! It's like...Ah, shit. I don't know either. Where's your dictionary?" Max walked toward the living room to find it.

"It's next to the television!"

"Ha! Found it.:" Max walked back to El's room with the dictionary in one hand and crackers in the other. She flipped the page to find the word. "Keenly: Intensely. There's also 'in an eager or enthusiastic manner.'" She shut the dictionary and put it back.

El was still confused. She didn't know if Mike looked at her that way.

She thought he looked at her like she looks at him. Normally.

"Max!" El called out again. Max walked back to her room and plopped down on the bed. "Do you think Mike looks at me keenly? And does he smile a lot?"

Max didn't even have to think twice--she already knew the answer. "El, he looks at you like his life depends on it. Actually, I think it does. Because he can *never stop looking* at you with those lovey dovey eyes. *And*, you always make him smile. He's a complete mouthbreather when you're not around."

El's heart leaps at what Max says. She smiles and blushes, thinking about Mike looking at her *keenly*.

She sighs contently and mentally tallies another one in her head. She looks down at the magazine again and reads the next one, "Number Six: He tells you that you're beautiful, even when you don't feel like it."

It was the first pool party of the summer and, by some miracle, The Party was invited.

"This party is gonna be so cool!" Dustin exclaimed, as they were all getting into Steve's car.

"Hey, someone in the back has to sit on someone else's lap. You can fit four across but not five." Steve said to Mike, El, Will, Lucas, and Max.

"El can sit on Mike's lap!" Max said before anyone else could say anything.

Mike looked around nervously until he realized that there was no point in arguing. The four of them sat down and then El sat on Mike's lap.

"Hi." She said softly. She smiled shyly at him.

"Hi." He smiled back at her. They looked into each other's eyes for a moment before the roar of Steve's car interrupted them. Mike cleared his throat and looked out the window to distract himself.

They pulled up into the front of Rebecca's house, a very popular girl in a

very big house.

"This is it!" Dustin said, opening his door. He almost ran out the car until Steve grabbed him.

"I just wanted to tell you guys three rules." He stared them all down, "No toxic shit in your body like drugs or alcohol and no sex."

"That's only two rules, Steve." Will told him.

"Third rule is that if you break the second rule, be safe. I don't want to be taking care of any little you's." They all groaned in disgust as they got out the car. Steve rolled down his window, "You may think it's disgusting but it happens! A lot!" Dustin flipped him off and Steve drove away.

The door was open so they walked in and found a lot of people dancing in the living room. They walked outside and saw an enormous pool with people in it playing with a ball or on top of other's shoulders.

"This is pretty cool." Max said.

"Cool? This is amazing! Spectacular!" Dustin exclaimed.

"You guys wanna swim? It's pretty hot." Lucas asked.

They looked each other and shrugged as to say 'Why not?' They took off their shirts and pants and jumped in the water.

El was the only one who didn't feel like swimming.

She looked around at all the girls who had their stomachs showing and a two-piece swimsuit. She saw how tan they were and how their bodies seemed perfect in every way. The way there was this curve that was so defined. Or the way their thighs weren't as chubby. Or the way their chests were so much more better than her's.

El felt...ugly in her one piece suit. She felt disgusting. She quickly put on her clothes and went inside.

Mike noticed and followed her inside. He followed her and noticed she locked herself in the bathroom.

He knocked, "El? I know you're in there."

"Mike, please, not now." She sniffled.

"What's wrong, El? Is there too many people?"

"No."

"The water too cold for you?"

"No."

"Can you swim?"

"Yes."

"Is it about...you know, the lab?"

"No."

He tried to think of everything. It didn't make any sense. Why was El locking herself in the bathroom?

He knocked one more time, "Can you tell me what's wrong? I want to help you feel better."

"T'm," She paused, "ugly." She let out a sob.

Mike was shocked. How could El let herself think that?

"Can you let me in please?"

"I don't want you to see me. I don't look pretty."

"T'm sure you do. You always look pretty to me."

There was a pause before she opened the door. Mike walked in and hugged her.

"You are so beautiful, El. You are beautiful inside and out. Your hair is beautiful. The way it also makes your pretty eyes even prettier amazes me."

"But my stomach is ugly."

Mike didn't know how to tell her how beautiful she is without trying to make it seem like he's saying all this to get with her.

He took a deep breath, "Your stomach is also beautiful. If you think that your's is ugly because you're looking at other girls, you're so wrong. Maybe it looks different than their's, so what? Your body is unique and so is their's. Everyone is beautiful in their own way and shape. Different is not ugly. Different is what makes everything so beautiful."

El sniffled, she didn't know if she should believe him. She looked at herself in the mirror and saw the same body. But this time, she saw all the good things about it. She smiled and, feeling better, hugged Mike. He hugged back after the initial shock and stroked her hair.

They both didn't want to break the hug, but neither of them would tell the other. So Mike broke it off and guided El back to the pool.

"Ready?" Mike asked once El finished taking off her clothes.

El grabbed his hand, "Ready."

And together they jumped in.

"El?" Max asked, waving a hand in front of her.

El broke out of her trance, "Yeah?"

"Is number six a yes or a no?"

"A yes. Definitely a yes."

"What's the next one?"

El looked down at the paper, "Number Seven: He is genuinely interested in you when you talk." She rubbed her temples, "Some of these are confusing."

*"What do you mean?" Max said, shoving even *more* food into her*

mouth.

"There are some that I can't answer! How do I know if Mike is genuinely interested in me when I talk?"

"Oh trust me, El. He is genuinely interested when you talk. He listens so closely and so passionately that it makes the FBI look bad."

"I don't get it." El was so confused.

"I didn't get that last part either. I don't know why I said it. But bottomline is, the boy is very interested when you talk."

El sighed and read the next one, "Number Eight: He gets jealous when other guys try and talk to you."

Back at the pool party, El is sitting on the edge of the pool waiting for Mike to come back with her drink.

She has her legs hanging in the water when a guy sits down next to her and copies her position.

El looks over at him, "What are you doing?"

He turned to face her, "Well, you look so comfortable that I thought I would give it a try."

"Oh, ok." El went back to her original position.

"That's a really pretty bathing suit. I like the stripe designs." He smiled as her pointed to her suit.

El smiled back, "Thank you! My friend thinks it pretty too. He like stripes as well." The guy's face twisted in a weird way.

"Who's, uh, the friend?"

"Mike. Mike Wheeler is my friend. Best friend."

"So, do you have a boyfriend? Or just the boy best friend?"

"Mike is only my best friend."

"Hm. So why don't we go watch a movie sometime? There's supposed to be a lot of good ones coming out this summer. We have all this free time. Why not spend it together?"

"I like movies. Yes, we should watch one."

They talked about movies they've watched and want to watch until Mike came back.

"Sorry it took so long, El. I couldn't find non-alcohol-" Mike shut up once he saw what was in front of him.

It was El and a guy sitting very close together and laughing. His heart crushed into a million pieces. But that was quickly forgotten when his anger rose and went through the roof.

"El."

"Oh hi, Mike! Bryce and I were just talking about what movies we want to watch over the summer."

"This the best friend?" Jason leaned in to ask El. She nodded in response.

Mike saw how close they were and how he was leaning in to tell her something. It made him even more irritated. He slammed the soda can right next to El, "Here's the drink you wanted." He walked away and went to Dustin and Will who were sitting down and talking.

El watched him leave and felt like that was the most painful experience in her life.

"I think that's another one."

"Oh yeah, definitely. I remember when Mike told us he saw you and that guy, Bryce from the party, coming out of the theater. He went straight to Lucas' and I were and started going off about how angry he was about it. He never directly said it but it was pretty obvious."

El felt her heart drop, "He said that?"

Max nodded, "I was scared he was going to punch someone. His anger was so strong that I felt like I could feel it. His vibe was scary"

that day."

"He never told me he was mad about that."

"He probably doesn't want you to think that you have to stop talking to Bryce because of him. Though, I'm pretty sure he would enjoy it if you did."

El didn't know what to say. She couldn't believe what Max was saying.

She cleared her throat and continued, "Number Nine: He introduces you to his family and friends."

"There's no question on that one. We definitely know you and the Wheelers definitely know you." Max paused, "Correction: Karen, Nancy, and Holly Wheeler definitely know you."

"Um, ok, so last one. Number Ten: He is always there for you. He will drop anything for you."

There was more than just moment. There were thousands of times where Mike was there for El when she needed him the most.

There was the time where she was first starting school. She was so worried about what other people would think about her. Mike came over and comforted her through all her worries. Because of Mike, she survived the first day and the day after that and the day after that and so on.

There was the time she failed her first test. She went to lunch crying and Mike was the first to hug her. When she calmed down, they both went her teacher's classroom and asked to retake the test. The teacher generously gave her another chance and El, with Mike's help, studied as hard as she could. She passed the test with flying colors the second time.

There was the time she had a panic attack due to her PTSD. Walking home with Mike, a black and white cat crossed their path. El's mind went back to the lab, back to *Papa*, and she couldn't fight it. She felt all her muscles tighten and felt like she couldn't breathe. Mike had helped her through the attack and stayed with her until Jim kicked him out.

And there was the time when she got her first period. They were in the Wheeler basement and El's stomach was killing her. She was on the couch with pillows on every side. When she got to the bathroom and saw all the blood, she screamed. Mike went straight to the door and pounded on the door, pleading her to tell him what was wrong. When she said she was bleeding, Mike knew what happened. He calmly told her he was going to get Nancy and didn't freak out like most boys his age would. The whole day was a rollercoaster of ups and downs but, thankfully, Mike was sitting right next to her on the ride.

"That's another one." El whispered to herself. She wiped a tear that fell down her face as she was thinking. "What do I do now, Max?"

"Look at the stuff at the bottom. It'll tell you the answer there."

El's eyes skipped to the bottom. *"10: This boy must be in love with you! What are you doing still reading this? Go get your man!"* is what the bubble said. "He's in love with me?" El asked Max.

"Well, you can't take it very seriously. But, this is Mike we're talking about, so I think that's the perfect way to describe his feelings for you."

"What do you want to do today?" Mike asked El. They were in the Wheeler basement for the day.

"Um, actually, can we talk about something?" She asked him.

When El finished the list, Max told her she needed to ask him about it if she really wanted to know what he felt. Because as good as the list is, the list is not Mike. So El decided that the next time she talked to Mike, she would tell him how *she* feels.

"Yeah, I need to talk to you about something too. But, you first."

All courage that El had faded away. She was sitting here, in front of Mike, completely vulnerable. *Bare*. She sat up straight, "I...I like you, Mike. I really, really, *really* like you. And...I don't know if you feel the

same way. I even looked at this dumb list that Max showed me." Mike didn't say anything but his eyes were wide. It made El feel even more nervous than she already was. "Say something?"

He was quiet for a few more seconds, "What did it say?"

"Hm?" El was confused.

"The results of the quiz or list thing. What did it say?"

"It, um, it said that you're in love with me? Whatever that means."

"In love is more than like. It's a way to put into words how much someone really means to you. It's a way to say everything...all at once." He looked down at his hands, "But, I mean, it isn't wrong." He looked up, hope swimming in his beautiful eyes.

"You mean..."

"That I'm in love with you? Last week you wore this pink cardigan and you had your hair done in a braid. That day, we went to the quarry because you said it was a nice day. But, I know why we really went. That same day was the day the rally at school happened. It was so crowded, loud, and overwhelming but you didn't show it because you didn't want to have to make one of us go out with you to the hallway. So, instead, you choked it down. You smiled and pretended to have fun so the rest of us could have fun. We went to the quarry because you were so...in shock that you wanted to be alone. But not completely alone because after all that's happened to you, you know that alone and lonely is not the best thing."

El was in shock. She couldn't understand how he...*understood* her so well. She didn't have to explain anything to him. He just *knew*.

"You...You noticed *all* that?"

"Of course I notice. I-I'm in love with you."

El's eyes filled with tears. She ran over tackle Mike with a hug. As they pulled away from the hug, something pulled them together. But this time, they kissed.

Sparks were *flying* everywhere. Imaginary fireworks in El's head going off. Everything perfect.

They pulled away and cuddled on the floor. They laid there facing each other and looking into each other's eyes.

"I love you." Mike said, not breaking eye contact.

"I love you too." El replied. She moved up, pausing right before their lips met, then kissing him one more time. They both poured out their feelings into the kiss. *Love*.

El pulled away again and laid her head in the crook of Mike's neck.

They laid there in comfortable silence. They didn't need anything but each other.

"You know, I took a quiz too." Mike said.

"Oh yeah?" El chuckled.

"Yeah, it was called 'Does She Dig It?' It was kind of stupid."

"But was it right?"

Mike paused, "Yeah, it was right."

"Then maybe these stupid quizzes aren't so stupid after all." Mike chuckled and pulled El closer. He kissed the top of her head and closed his eyes. She closed her eyes as well, feeling safe and warm in Mike's arms.

Together they drifted into a blissful sleep. Enjoying each other's *loving* embrace.